

Support and build the Caterpillar Workers Rank-and-File Committee!

Will Lehman
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Will Lehman is a worker at Mack Trucks and socialist who has been running for president of the United Auto Workers in the union's national elections. Learn more about his campaign at willforuawpresident.org.

Hello, Brothers and Sisters,

This is Will Lehman. I want to call on all autoworkers and workers throughout the UAW to support workers at Caterpillar, the world's largest construction equipment manufacturer.

On Tuesday night shortly after midnight, the UAW announced a "last-minute" tentative agreement with Caterpillar, rejecting growing demands by workers for strike action once the contract expired.

The six-year contract proposal would enforce a massive cut in real wages. The contract increases nominal wages by an average of just about 3 percent a year, and a significant portion of that would be eaten up a 2 percent annual increase in health care premiums. With inflation currently above 6 percent, this means that workers would see a sharp decline in real income and the buying power of their wages would be lower by the end of the contract.

The UAW apparatus is following a pro-company playbook which many workers will be familiar with. It has kept Caterpillar workers in the dark about what it's discussing with management for months. It has released only a few pages of contract "highlights." It is trying to lure workers with a big signing bonus. But we all know that the bigger the signing bonus, the bigger the sellout.

Caterpillar workers are fighting back. Last month, a group of militant workers formed the Caterpillar Rank-and-File Committee, in order to share information and provide a way for workers to communicate and unify across both UAW and non-UAW plants.

The rank-and-file committee released a statement

Wednesday denouncing the UAW bureaucracy's deal as a sellout and calling for workers to reject it and prepare for strike action.

The committee has put out demands based on what workers actually need, including:

- A 50 percent wage increase for all workers

- The return of COLA (regular cost-of-living raises)

- The immediate abolition of the wage and benefit tier system

- At least two weeks of paid personal time for all workers

- A massive reduction in health care premiums and out-of-pocket costs for both current workers and retirees

- The restoration of pensions for all workers

They are also demanding that the full contract language be released and that workers have rank-and-file oversight over the contract talks.

This battle is not just about Caterpillar. The corporations and the ruling class as a whole are determined to inflict a major defeat. As far as they are concerned, it is workers who must pay for the deepening economic crisis and, above all, the war policy of the ruling elites. Hundreds of billions are being spent to wage war against Russia over Ukraine and to prepare for war against China. Caterpillar, moreover, is a major military supplier, and the Biden administration and the two capitalist parties will tolerate no disruption to their supply chains.

I have been running for UAW president in the union's national elections over the past year on a program of rank-and-file power: abolishing the pro-corporate UAW bureaucracy, transferring control and decision-making to workers on the shop floor, and building a network of rank-and-file committees internationally to fight for what workers need.

The Cat workers are in a fight that has major

significance for the whole working class. They need and deserve your support. Share the statements of the Caterpillar Rank-and-File Committee with your coworkers and discuss what they're fighting for. Send me statements of support for the workers, and contact me about joining and building the network of rank-and-file committees: willforuawpresident@gmail.com.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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